

species were recorded at the turn of the century which no longer appear to survive or visit this area at the present time.

On June 17th 1978 I was visiting a jungle clad region at the foot of the Margalla Hills just west of Islamabad city when I heard a strange bird calling. Upon investigation this turned out to be the Indian Pitta. There was a pair frequenting the steep hillside above a stream and I had clear views of what was presumably the male singing from the top of a stunted wild fig tree. The location was at about 2,000 feet elevation and hardly more than three miles from the outskirts of Islamabad (33°28'N, 73°03'E). The World Wildlife Fund Appeal had chosen this site for construction of a pre-release pen for the Cheer Pheasant (*Catreus wallichii*) which has been

bred in captivity and is now believed to be extinct in the Margalla Hills. Dr. Sheldon Severinghaus was visiting Pakistan to assist with this project and I was able to bring him the next morning to observe these Pittas. He made recordings of the male which are now lodged in the Cornell University library of bird sounds. I was able to visit the area again on July 13th 1978 at which time one individual was still in the same vicinity and heard calling, however when I reported this find to a keen ornithologist friend, Mr. T. J. Roberts he failed to find any trace of these birds on July 28th. The Margalla Hills are covered with dry tropical deciduous type of scrub forest and would seem to provide ideal habitat for Pittas.

C-24, K. D. A. SCHEME No. 1,  
DRIGH ROAD, KARACHI,  
PAKISTAN,  
August 7, 1978.

KAMAL ISLAM

## 7. A NEW BIRD FOR NEPAL AND NOTES ON OTHER SCARCE SPECIES

At 16.00 hours on 23rd February 1978 I was fortunate enough to be drifting downstream along the main channel of the Narayani River just below its confluence with the River Rapti in the Nepalese terai when I spotted a swan some 200 yards ahead. My companions were principally amateur European bird-watchers and naturalists, members of a special interest tour I was leading for Town and Gown Travel of Oxford, UK, as well as Khadak Kumar of Tiger Tops Jungle Lodge staff. As we drifted closer the pure white plumage, smallish size and yellow area at the base of the black bill became visible.

I turned the boats and we approached within about 80 yards to obtain excellent views of the truncated (not pointed) yellow area at the base of the bill. At this point the bird pattered over the surface showing its black feet, and took to the air with neither wing sound nor call. In the air the comparatively rapid wing beats and general compactness reinforced my identification of this bird as a fully adult, wild Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus*. Sálím Ali and S. Dillon Ripley's HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN list five records for the sub-continent, none in Nepal. R. L. Fleming Sr., R. L. Fleming Jr., and L. S.

Bangdel do not include the species in their BIRDS OF NEPAL. By good fortune I was able to talk to R. L. Fleming Jr., within a couple of days and he confirmed that there were no previous records for Nepal. It should be added that as a European resident I have observed thousands of these birds over the years and would not consider them difficult to identify.

The weather at this time was quite severe in the hills and R. L. Fleming Jr., considered it an exceptionally hard winter. Certainly it had produced several records of unusual northern passerine species in and around the Kathmandu valley.

On 26th February 1978 I was once again drifting downstream on the Narayani River, this time in company with Peter Jackson of the World Wildlife Fund, Morges; David Smith of the Smithsonian Tiger Ecology Project; Charles McDougal, Director of Wildlife at Tiger Tops Jungle Lodge; and Michael Price of Survival Anglia. Our aim was to explore the new western extension of Chitawan National Park. Within an hour of leaving the Narayani-Rapti confluence we encountered several large flocks of duck. Mostly these were Brahminy Duck *Tadorna ferruginea*, Teal *Anas crecca*, Wigeon *A. penelope*, Pintail *A. acuta* with some Goosander *Mergus merganser*, Gadwall *Anas strepera* and Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*. Then I spotted a drake

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* followed soon afterwards by a drake Falcated Teal *Anas falcata*. The Goldeneye is the third record for Nepal, the Falcated Teal the first record for Nepal away from the Kosi River. Both birds were also seen by Peter Jackson and Michael Price, two experienced observers.

On 28th February 1978 the same party was finishing its trek beside the Narayani at Mohan Khola about five miles downstream from the Narayani-Rapti confluence. A large raptor appeared and gave excellent views as it circled overhead. Its general coloration was dark brown with a faint light line along the edges of the under-wing coverts. The head was prominent and the wings long and broad and held well forward. Clearly an eagle, its identification was ensured by the prominent and distinctly wedge-shaped tail. The bird was immature and lacked the white retrices of the adult White-tailed Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*. However, by good fortune, I had seen a transparency of an individual in similar plumage only two weeks or so before. The tail feathers formed a distinctive wedge and against the light each retrace was edged all round with a darker colour giving the effect of a "leaded window" of the tail feathers and indicating a second or third year bird. This bird constitutes the second record for Nepal, the first being an adult at Pokhara in 1971.

35 BRODRICK ROAD,  
WANDSWORTH COMMON,  
LONDON, SW17, U.K.,  
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JOHN GOODERS